ECLECTIC VEDANTISM.

A PHILOSOPHICAL POEM

IN FREQUENT USE AMONGST

HINDU WOMEN,

TRANSLATED FROM THE TAMIL,

BY

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" Missionaries generally are not sufficiently acquainted with Hinduism as a religious system to attempt conversions among the higher and more educated classes, and therefore the only success they meet with is among the mere worms of the country."—THE ABBOT OF THE HINDU MONASTERY AT MADURA, *in a recent interview with a Missionary.*

AVIRŌTAVUNTIYĀR

OR

THE NON-CONTROVERSIALISTS' DANCE.

BY

SĀNTALINGASUVĀMI OF TIRUTTUREIYŪR.[a]

1. The sovereign lord of all became a human priest
To obliterate the sorrows of our present life.
Come let us prostrate ourselves at his sacred feet.

2. This book is called
The Non-controversialists' Dance,
Because it is not a sectarian work of interminable controversy.

3. Wise men, who scoff not at the outward form of things without examining their substance,
Will not deride its homely phraseology
Before they have examined the value of its contents.

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[a] This poem exhibits in a popular form the doctrines of a school founded by a pupil of one of Sāntalingasuvāmi's disciples at Pōrūr near Chingleput in the beginning of the 17th Century, which has continued in existence to the present time. The founder of this school, whose name was Sitamparasuvāmi, wrote a commentary upon this poem, consisting principally of illustrative extracts taken from seventy-nine different works in Tamil treating of the same or some kindred subject. The present head of the school at Pōrūr is said to be the ninth in succession from its founder.

4. Of the four essential things, Virtue, Riches,
Pleasure, Emancipation,
The chiefest is Emancipation:
If you examine them, Emancipation itself is all.

5. What higher Virtue can there be
Than the relinquishment of all the unstable things around us?
This is true Emancipation.

6. Good men say that imperishable riches is real riches:
What else than this can be called true Riches?
All besides is but delusion.

7. No lesser joy, can equal fulness of joy;
What else can constitute true Pleasure?
This alone is never-ending happiness.

8. Wherefore all true scripture declares
That this very Emancipation
Is the highest reward of knowledge.

9. Since Emancipation cannot be secured without knowledge,
He who shall attain to that blissful state
Is the man who possesses true knowledge in perfection.

10. The four vedas and other sacred writings,
Call him a possessor of true knowledge,
Who has cast off the pride of the 'I' and the 'Mine.'

11. Of the four-fold class of substances commencing with body,
The body and its organs constitute the 'I;'
The remaining two, namely, the world and the enjoyment of it, constitute the 'Mine.'

12. The perishable body is foreign to the immortal soul:
Therefore the delusion which called the unity of these two the 'I,'
Is but the ignorance of olden times.

13. Just as the latent heat of firewood is invisible,
So the delusion respecting women, gold, and other objects of desire,
Can be removed from man's mind only by experience.

14. Unless the enemy first remove the surrounding forest he cannot capture the city wall:
How then shall men's internal obstacles depart,
While they have not driven away the external?

15. When a man has cast off his external obstacles, so as to think of them no more,
And clings firmly to true knowledge,
His internal obstacles will flee away of their own accord.

16. If the residence of a man in the midst of family cares,

Does not prove an obstacle to the attainment of true knowledge,
The domestic state need not be exchanged for the ascetic state.

17. If the head of a family while surrounded by domestic incumbrances,
Is unable to emancipate himself from care,
How can he attain to true knowledge?

18. Since there are those who have been ferried over the waters by clinging to a stone,
The wise will not say, that, amongst those who cling to domestic incumbrances,
There are none who have attained to true knowledge.

19. Death approaches to give Emancipation to all men:
Before he arrives to bestow it upon them the good will emancipate themselves,
Studying to understand that which constitutes happiness.

20. The duty of those who are well instructed in the doctrine of the present and future life,
Is to put themselves under the instruction of the priest,
And, by the aid of the body, to meditate upon eternal bliss so as without delay to attain to it.

21. The physician administers medicines in cases of mortal disease:
So the deity became a spiritual physician on behalf of the devout,
In order to heal them of their ignorance.

22. The concurrence of these three things in one infallible certainty, namely,—
The teaching of this benignant priest, the doctrines of true scripture, and the testimony of one's own experience,—
This constitutes the way of bliss.

23. Though the scripture seems to speak of many paths to the one heaven
When different devout persons read it,
That way is still but one to those who have arrived at the truth.

24. Just as it is in the case of castes and sects,
They who depart from the way of immutable true doctrine,
Can never return into it.

25. Caste and sect are absorbed in the form of religion to which they severally belong:
That religion also is absorbed in the true substance:
That which is imperishable is but one.

26. Of those religions which are in discord one with another,

If one of them is not exterminated by another,
How shall we say which of them is false?

27. All religions have their alternate defeats and triumphs,
Caused by continual changes in the circumstances of the times:
This is the lord's doing.

28. Those who are well read, and have meditated on the matter,
Will not say that the receding religions are powerless,
But only that their advocates are weak.

29. It is incorrect to say that any one of the six forms of religion is superior to the rest,
Forasmuch as all six are in actual existence,
And each has its requisite measure of principles and proofs.

30. Even after a man has become acquainted with the doctrines of all religious systems,
His heart still clings to his own religion:
What form of religion, then, can be called powerless?

31. Those who have acquainted themselves with all religious systems,
Do not continue in connexion with them all:
And if they forsake them what sin is it?

32. There are persons who have forsaken one form of religion, and have attached themselves to another,
Convinced that that is the better way;
They are not to be blamed.

33. Therefore, to such as have attained to the better way,
What is caste? And what is sect?
They have obliterated such thoughts as these.

34. Though he conforms outwardly to this sect or that,
In heart the truly wise man is unconnected with either:
Just as the lotus floats upon the water unaffected by the moisture.

35. The truly wise man seeks for such knowledge
As is NOT OPPOSED to the six religious sects:
This is the true Sittāntam, that is to say, the final end of knowledge.

36. The essential objects of all religions mentioned in the scriptures
Are these three things, namely, God, Soul, and Nature which constitutes the bondage of the soul,
The names by which they are called are very various.

37. There is one only God,
Possessed of inseparable purity, fulness, eternity, and other similar attributes:
The existence of the worlds is the proof of this.

38. There are also eternal Souls;
Because they have received from God many transmigrations, and a final state of bliss:
But they inherit nothing in their own right.

39. All men acknowledge that Bondage also exists;
Forasmuch as many souls have been emancipated from it,
That bondage too is eternal.

40. The cords of that bondage are three-fold, namely, Ignorance, Delusion, Action:
We teach this because there are some who say,
That, Ignorance has not an original existence.

41. But although God, Soul, and Bondage,
Form the subject matter of all men's religion,
Their respective tenets differ exceedingly.

42. On account of the sound doctrine, that,
"God and Soul are a non-duality,"
A general and never-ending controversy has arisen amongst men,
Some maintaining that they are one, some that they are two.

43. If both are one, then emancipation is impossible,

Or if it exists, it must have been superadded as a mere divine recreation;
And so bondage and emancipation would become non-eternal.

44. If the bondage of the soul be but a delusion,
How can it have a real existence
In the sight of the one absolutely pure God?

45. If God and Soul are two, then souls possessed of the grace of God,
Must have been free from the beginning:
Why then should they need emancipation now?

46. If God produced that bondage
By adding uncreated darkness to the things which he created,
What can be the meaning of the divine Sakti, that is to say, the divine energy in which all created things exist?

47. Those three things, God, Soul, and Bondage, only admit of being spoken of;
They cannot be conceived properly by human thought, nor can their true nature be examined,
Because human thought is included in Bondage.

48. To employ the unreal world in examining the nature of the true substance,
Is like the man who seeks his home amidst the darkness of night
By the tiny light of the glow-worm.

49. Therefore one must sever asunder that bondage
By the destruction of one's perceptive faculties.
This is the path in which God-makes himself manifest to the soul.

50. They who have become acquainted with the one thing that is all things,
Have become acquainted with all things.
This is the seed-grain—the germ of the future forest—in the palm of man's hand.

51. In order to attain to that religious abstraction,
First of all learn to know the difference between body and soul,
And cast aside thy native ignorance.

52. This present body is not thy self-hood;
Because at the time of rest in death
It is burnt up by the fierce fire, and its members are dissolved.

53. Nor is thy breath thy self-hood;
Because daily, when thou art unconscious in sleep,
It loses the power of smelling.

54. Thy mental faculties are not thy self-hood;
Because, while one of them is active, another of them is inactive,
And a third both perceives and utters its thoughts aloud at one and the same time.

55. Nor is thy power of speech thy self-hood;
Because even the dumb man, who is without that power,
Is yet possessed of the 'I' and the 'Mine.'

56. Self-consciousness, the certifying Judgment,
The Intellect, which examines things, and elevates the man,
Neither of these is thy self-hood.

57. Since Reason is under the control of Knowledge
It cannot be identical with Knowledge; it is in fact a material thing.
Knowledge alone is thy proper form.

58. The imperishable soul is illimitable;
Because it is united to the lord in the state of emancipation, and is therefore omnipresent.
More need not be said of it.

59. In order thus to hide thyself in God,
Put aside all thy old habits,
And drive away thy bondage.

60. When thou art no longer in contact with the obstacles to emancipation,
And hast separated them entirely from thee,
Thou mayest henceforth aim after the beatific rest.

61. Grasp thy intellect, surrounded by its five organs of sense;

Let it not go, but bury it in the depths of thy bosom,
So that thought may not be stirred up.

62. Bury thy heart, so that it may not palpitate:
If it still agitate thee, destroy it in the act.
Then the demon intellect will expire.

63. When thou hast obtained the mastery over thy reason, so as to destroy its activity,
Take care that it does not subsequently become active,
Contending against it with knowledge.

64. While in that state ignorance will not approach thee.
Seek daily to find the sleep of consciousness:
The supreme substance will then appear to thee.

65. This exalted religious meditation,
Destroying the duality, and constituting unity with God,
Is the state of emancipation of the non-dualistic faith.

66. I am quite willing that persons of different creeds
Should speak of any kind of religious meditation that may please their fancy,
Provided they do not teach the doctrine of the separation of the soul from God.

67. How should it be possible for me fully to explain

The doctrine of the 'Not I,' and the emancipation which constitutes the 'I?'
The four mysterious books themselves do not extend so far.

68. Just as those who are in bondage have no God,
So they who are emancipated through supreme grace have no world,
Because God is all to them.

69. Though thou mayest fancy that all things are God,
This is no more than a matter of doctrine, it is not true:
When thou hast advanced thus far, cast it from thee.

70. When thou hast attained to absence of thought,
The consciousness of that fact will itself become a thought:
This is the teaching of all scripture.

71. It is necessary to consider the absolute state of the soul:
The absence of all oppressing darkness
Constitutes that pure state of the soul.

72. If thou art unable to bury thyself in that state of abstraction,
Fix thy mind upon some one simple thought:
And when that thought has grown unto ripeness, pluck it off.

73. One light alone exists:
In it are contained the eight substances, and all things else beside:
Fix thy thought on this great light alone.

74. The unreal world is united to the dawning deity:
The wise do not call it foreign to him:
How then can good and evil be attributed to it?

75. If thoughts of 'I' and 'Mine' arise in the mind, thoughts of happiness and misery and such like things will arise with them:
In order that they may not appear,
Strengthen thyself with the reflection that the soul has no inheritance of its own.

76. God is the sole proprietor of the whole creation:
Cast away, therefore, all bodily cares, for they are foreign to thee;
And fix thy constant thoughts on him alone.

77. Since the almighty, all-abounding, spotless one
Perceived all retributable things in a moment of time, and apportioned them to mankind to experience,
Who can escape experiencing them?

78. When a man through great exertions has attained to the state of emancipation,

The unreal 'Mine' and 'I' will pass away;
These things cannot be otherwise destroyed.

79. This absence of thought is the state of supreme abstraction;
There is no other worship equal to it in the sight of God:
It unites man to the truth.

80. If this method be yet too difficult for thee
Place this my form in thy inmost mind, namely,
Utter the sacred syllable 'Om.'

81. Whether it be the sacred word of five letters, or that of eight letters, or any other similar one,
Cast away all hypocrisy,
And utter whichever of them is most agreeable to thee.

82. In the absence of this ejaculatory worship
Use silent meditation, and such like means,
To purify thy thought.

83. The three objects of men's worship namely, the Creator, the Preserver, and the Destroyer,
Together with the different forms which they have assumed,
All are 'I' and 'Mine.'

84. Whichever god thou mayest choose for thyself, call it the 'I,' and then thou mayest worship it,

Yielding thy body and all its members to it,
With unfeigned sincerity.

85. If it were possible to offer a material sacrifice without clarified butter,
It might also be possible to offer the five kinds of mental sacrifice
Without constraining love.

86. If thy five senses refuse to bow down in love to the mighty God,
Cause knowledge to enter into thy intellect,
And cry aloud, 'Thou art no help to me.'

87. Different animals are destroyed through the delusion of some one or other of their five senses:
If we be similarly destroyed by our deceivable senses
How shall we obtain life?

88. In woman there are enticements for the five senses of man:
Why is it said, O soul,
That, if thou desire them, destruction is at hand?

89. The pleasure derived from the indulgence of carnal appetites,
Is like the deceptive satisfaction which arises on rubbing the bite of a spider,—
It extends itself into a great sore.

90. Cow's milk and raghee gruel will satisfy any man's hunger;
But they themselves become mere excrementitious matter:
Desire not therefore such things as merely please the palate.

91. Just as unsought for troubles cross our path,
So too we experience unsought for pleasures:
These, O soul, are the ways of destiny.

92. Follow up these different methods now set before thee
Until thou hast attained to the state of pure abstraction;
And then thou shalt obtain bliss.

93. If thought arise, my child, abstraction will flee away.
If after all that has been done it still arise,
Of what use can instruction or meritorious actions be to thee?

94. Though they who have attained to bliss be found dancing and singing,
This is only the exuberant play of their joy:
It is not proper to criticize their conduct.

95. These distinguished persons have the whole land before them to supply them with food,
And the dunghill to supply them with rags for clothing:

But yet they give not these things a single
thought.

96. The broken potsherd picked up by the wayside,
or in the absence of that, their hand,
Forms for them a sufficient eating utensil
To eat that which they gather up and down
the country in alms.

97. The solitary hermitage is their home;
And the bare earth is their bed of roses
On which they sleep the sleep of bliss.

98. They perceive no object but God alone:
What friendships, then, and what enmities
Can ascetics possess?

99. Since the lord their God is their-only portion,
They have liberty to do whatsoever they please:
For them there are neither commandments nor
prohibitions.

100. They who have become united to God who
abounds in grace,
Will not withhold that grace, while in this life,
From any living soul.